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# ENVIRONMENTAL Fact Sheet

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## Care and Maintenance of Your Septic System

### **What is a septic system?**

A septic system is a two part treatment and disposal system designed to condition untreated liquid household waste (sewage) so that it can be readily dispersed and percolated into the subsoil. Percolation through the soil accomplishes much of the final purification of the effluent, including the destruction of disease-producing bacteria.

A septic tank provides the first step in the process by removing larger solid materials, decomposing solids by bacterial action, and storing sludge and scum. The liquid between sludge and scum is then passed along to the leaching area for final treatment and absorption into the ground. Remember: A properly maintained septic system will adequately treat your sewage.

### **What should I do to maintain my septic system?**

Know the location of your septic tank and leaching area.

- Inspect your tank yearly and have the tank pumped as needed and at least every three years.
- Do not flush bulky items such as throw-away diapers or sanitary pads into your system.
- Do not flush toxic materials such as paint thinner, pesticides, or chlorine into your system as they may kill the bacteria in the tank. These bacteria are essential to a properly operating septic system.
- Repair leaking fixtures promptly.
- Be conservative with your water use and use water-reducing fixtures wherever possible.
- Keep deep-rooted trees and shrubs from growing on your leaching area.
- Keep heavy vehicles from driving or parking on your leaching area.

### **For Further Information**

If you have any questions concerning septic systems, contact DES Subsurface at (603) 271-3501, or PO Box 95 - 29 Hazen Drive, Concord, NH 03302-0095; (603) 271-3711; Fax: (603) 271-6683; [www.des.nh.gov/ssb/](http://www.des.nh.gov/ssb/).